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Thematic Focus: Development as Discourse

The Role of Hawa Market in Female Empowerment: Implications for Women's Development- Salma Yaqoob (2015-2017)

This research aimed at figuring out the conceptualization of empowerment on part of AKRSP as an organization. It also aimed at seeing if women due to their involvement in Hawa market as entrepreneurs have empowered them psychologically, politically and economically. This research is based on secondary as well as primary data collection. The primary data was collected from Hawa market in Skardu. Qualitative research strategy was used in this research. Methods for collecting primary data included rapport building, census forms, semi-structured interviews, interview schedules, problem-centered interviews and focus group discussions. The units of data collection included women entrepreneurs in Hawa market, functionaries of AKRSP Skardu who conceived and implemented the Hawa market project, members of anjuman-e-tajiran in Ali Chowk, owner of the market and heads of the household from where women entrepreneurs were interviewed.

Key Findings

1. AKRSP concept of women empowerment is limited to women's involvement in economic endeavours and does not go on to political and psychological empowerment.
2. Although the women entrepreneurs are earning money but in most cases it is not resulting in their economic empowerment because they are spending that money on the family while becoming victims of double burden.
3. Most of the women despite earning money have not been psychologically empowered because they accept and work in accordance to the patriarchal norms and values.
4. With the exception of one respondent, all of the other women entrepreneurs interviewed were not politically empowered as far as the public domain is considered. In terms of domestic decision making the result shows that women roles here have increased but the major decision makers are still men.

Policy Relevance

1. Although there is no dearth of research on women's empowerment, yet, in some studies the focus is more on economic growth so the importance of women's empowerment is closely connected with the well-being of family. Therefore, the current study aimed to find out how women's integration in a market empowers them personally and changes their views about themselves.
2. The studies reviewed in this research have used a very limited notion of empowerment with an emphasis on purchasing decision etc. This study has also investigated as to how women gain control over other aspects of their lives due to economic independence. Another issue addressed in this research is the change that has come about in the inter-gender power relationships in the private and public domain favouring the status of women.